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Sustainable development and international economic cooperation: women in development

Report of the Second Committee*

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I. Introduction

1. The Second Committee held a substantive debate on agenda item 99 (see A/54/587, para. 2). Action on sub-item (c) was taken at the 33rd and 44th meetings, on 8 November and 1 December 1999. An account of the Committee's consideration of the sub-item is contained in the relevant summary records (A/C.2/54/SR.33 and 44).

II. Consideration of proposals

A. Draft resolutions A/C.2/54/L.21 and A/C.2/54/L.52

2. At the 33rd meeting, on 8 November, the representative of Guyana, on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Group of 77 and China, introduced a draft resolution entitled "Women in development" (A/C.2/54/L.21), which read:

> "*The General Assembly*,
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> "*Recalling* its resolution 52/195 of 18 December 1997 and all other Assembly resolutions on the integration of women in development, and also the resolutions and the agreed conclusions adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women on the integration of women in development,

* The report of the Committee on this item will be issued in nine parts, under the symbol A/54/587 and Add.1-8.

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"*Reaffirming* the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of recent major United Nations conferences and summits,

"*Recalling* the ministerial communiqué of the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council on the theme "The role of employment and work in poverty eradication: the empowerment and advancement of women",

"*Reaffirming* that gender equality is of fundamental importance for achieving sustained economic growth and sustainable development and that investing in the development of women has a multiplier effect in this regard,

"*Recognizing* the significant contribution that women make to economic activities and the major force that they represent for change and development in all sectors of the economy, especially in key areas such as agriculture, industry and services,

"*Reaffirming* that women are key contributors to the economy and to combating poverty through both remunerated and unremunerated work at home, in the community and in the workplace and that the empowerment of women is a critical factor in the eradication of poverty,

"*Recognizing* that the rapid development of information technology and other new technologies presents both opportunities and challenges to women, in particular in developing countries,

"*Concerned* that the continued discrimination against women, and the denial or lack of equal rights and access to, *inter alia*, education and training, employment opportunities, capital, technology and other areas of production hinder them from achieving their full potential,

"*Recognizing* that the difficult socio-economic conditions that exist in many developing countries, in particular in the least developed countries, have resulted in the acceleration of the feminization of poverty and that the empowerment of women is a critical factor in the eradication of poverty,

"*Aware* that, although globalization and liberalization processes may have created employment opportunities for women in some countries, they have made women in developing countries, in particular in Africa and the least developed countries, more vulnerable to increased economic volatility, job insecurity and loss of livelihood,

"*Recognizing* that in the field of agriculture women have been disproportionately affected by the negative effects of market liberalization, since the opening of local markets to cheaper imports and the removal of agricultural subsidies have in general led to the loss of employment among small-scale farmers who are more likely to be women than men,

"*Emphasizing* the promotion of programmes aimed at financial intermediation with a view to ensuring the access of rural women to agricultural inputs and implements and, in particular, to easing collateral requirements for access to credit by women,

"*Recognizing* that the informal sector is a major source of entrepreneurship and employment for women in developing countries and that data collection on its important contribution should be improved,

"*Expressing its concern* about the poor representation of women in economic decision- making and stressing the importance of inculcating a gender perspective in policy formulation and implementation,

"*Recognizing* that an increase in paid employment may not always mean empowerment for women since, in general, the burden of household work and primary responsibility of women for childcare in many instances give rise to an onerous double working day for most women,

"*Stressing* the need for a family-friendly work environment, including appropriate working hours, affordable childcare and flexible working hours, and emphasizing the principle of shared responsibility between women and men for the achievement of gender equality,

"*Noting* the importance of the organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, in particular its funds and programmes, including the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, in facilitating the advancement of women in development,

"1. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on the 1999 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development: Globalization, Gender and Work;

"2. *Calls* for the speedy and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action and the relevant provisions contained in the outcomes of all other major United Nations conferences and summits and, in this regard, expresses the hope that the special session of the General Assembly on questions and issues related to women scheduled for the year 2000 can take tangible and significant steps to enhance the effective participation of women in development;

"3. *Stresses* that a favourable and conducive national and international environment in all fields of life is necessary for the effective integration of women in development;

"4. *Urges* Governments to develop and promote methodologies for mainstreaming a gender perspective into all aspects of policy-making, and also to develop national strategies for promoting sustainable and productive entrepreneurial activities to generate income among disadvantaged women and women living in poverty;

"5. *Urges* all Governments to ensure women's equal rights with men and their full and equal access to education, technology and economic resources, to increase and improve access to credit facilities, in particular for rural women and women in the informal sector, and to facilitate, where appropriate, the transition of women from the informal to the formal sector;

"6. *Recognizes* the role of microcredit in the eradication of poverty, empowerment of women and generation of employment and, in this regard, encourages the strengthening of existing and emerging microcredit institutions and their capacities, including the support of international financial institutions;

"7. *Stresses* the need for assistance that would enable women in developing countries to have full access to and use of new technologies, including information technologies, for their empowerment;

"8. *Urges* Governments to design and revise laws that would ensure that women are accorded full and equal rights to own land and other property, including

through the right of inheritance, and to undertake administrative reforms and other necessary measures that would give women the same right as men to credit, capital, appropriate technologies, access to markets and information;

"9. *Requests* Governments to ensure the full participation of women in decision- making and policy formulation and implementation at all levels so that their priorities can be adequately reflected in national policy;

"10. *Calls upon* Governments to promote, *inter alia*, through legislation, family-friendly and gender-sensitive work environments and also to promote the facilitation of breastfeeding for working mothers;

"11. *Stresses* the need for Governments and employers to implement policies aimed at ensuring stability and security of work and to put in place social insurance policies that cover temporary, part-time, informal sector and home workers, a majority of whom are women;

"12. *Calls upon* the international community to implement policies to ensure the stabilization of capital flows in order to prevent excess volatility and economic disruption which have a disproportionately negative impact on women, and to enhance trade opportunities for developing countries in order to improve the economic conditions of women;

"13. *Urges* the international community, the United Nations system and relevant organizations to give priority to assisting the efforts of developing countries to ensure the full and effective participation of women in deciding and implementing development strategies and integrating gender concerns into national programmes, including by providing adequate resources to operational activities for development;

"14. *Calls upon* developed countries to strengthen their efforts to achieve, as soon as possible, the agreed target of 0.7 per cent of their gross national product for overall official development assistance and, where agreed, within that target to earmark 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of gross national product for the least developed countries, so as to enable the developing countries to implement strategies to eradicate poverty, promote productive employment and achieve gender equality;

"15. *Urges* multilateral donors, international financial institutions and regional development banks to review and implement policies to support national efforts to ensure that a higher proportion of resources reach women, in particular in rural and remote areas;

"16. *Calls upon* the United Nations system to integrate gender mainstreaming into all its programmes and policies, including in the integrated follow up to United Nations conferences, in accordance with agreed conclusions 1997/2 on gender mainstreaming adopted by the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1997;

"17. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-sixth session the sub-item entitled "Women in development".

3. At the 44th meeting, on 1 December, the Vice-Chairman of the Committee, Alexandru Niculescu (Romania), introduced a draft resolution entitled "Women in development" (A/C.2/54/L.52), which he submitted on the basis of informal consultations held on draft resolution A/C.2/54/L.21.

4. In introducing the draft resolution, the Vice-Chairman orally revised operative paragraph 11 by adding the words "with men" after the words "equal rights" and by replacing the words "right of inheritance" with the words "right to inheritance".

5. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.2/54/L.52, as orally revised (see para.8).

6. In the light of the adoption of draft resolution A/C.2/54/L.52, draft resolution A/C.2/54/L.21 was withdrawn by its sponsors.

B. Draft decision proposed by the Chairman

7. At its 44th meeting, on 1 December, on the proposal of the Chairman, the Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly that it take note of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "An evaluation of the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women" (A/54/156-E/1999/102) and the comments of the Secretary-General thereon (A/54/156/Add.1-E/1999/102/Add.1) (see para. 9).

III. Recommendations of the Second Committee

8. The Second Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

Women in development

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 52/195 of 18 December 1997 and all its other resolutions on the integration of women in development, and also the relevant resolutions and the agreed conclusions, including those on Women in the economy,[1] adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women,

Reaffirming the Beijing Platform for Action[2] and the outcome of recent major United Nations conferences and summits,

Recalling the ministerial communiqué of the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council on the theme "The role of employment and work in poverty eradication: the empowerment and advancement of women",[3]

Reaffirming that gender equality is of fundamental importance for achieving sustained economic growth and sustainable development in accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions and recent United Nations conferences, and that investing in the development of women and girls has a multiplier effect, in particular on productivity, efficiency and sustained economic growth,

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[1] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1997, Supplement No. 7* (E/1997/27), chap. I, sect. C.1, agreed conclusions 1997/3.

[2] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

[3] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 3* (A/54/3), chap. III, para. 23.

Recognizing the significant contribution that women make to the economy and the major force that they represent for change and development in all sectors of the economy, especially in key areas such as agriculture, industry and services,

Reaffirming that women are key contributors to the economy and to combating poverty through both remunerated and unremunerated work at home, in the community and in the workplace and that the empowerment of women is a critical factor in the eradication of poverty,

Recognizing that the rapid development of information technology and other new technologies presents both opportunities and challenges to women, in particular in developing countries,

Recognizing also that population and development issues, education and training, health, nutrition, the environment, water supply, sanitation, housing, communications, science and technology and employment opportunities are important elements for effective poverty eradication and the advancement and empowerment of women,

Recognizing further in this context the importance of respect for all human rights, including the right to development, and of a national and international environment that promotes, *inter alia*, justice, equity, popular participation and political freedom for the advancement and empowerment of women,

Concerned that the continued discrimination against women, the denial or lack of equal rights and access to education, training and credit facilities, and the lack of control over land, capital, technology and other areas of production impede their full and equal contribution to and equal opportunity to benefit from development,

Recognizing that the difficult socio-economic conditions that exist in many developing countries, in particular in the least developed countries, have resulted in the acceleration of the feminization of poverty and that the empowerment of women is a critical factor in the eradication of poverty,

Aware that, although globalization and liberalization processes have created employment opportunities for women in many countries, they have made women, especially in developing countries, and in particular the least developed countries, more vulnerable to problems caused by increased economic volatility,

Recognizing that some effects of market liberalization may deepen the socio-economic marginalization of women in the agricultural sector, including through the loss of employment among small-scale farmers who are more likely to be women than men, and emphasizing that small-scale women farmers need special support and empowerment so as to be able to meet the challenges and opportunities of agricultural market liberalization,

Recognizing that enhanced trade opportunities for developing countries, including through trade liberalization, will improve the economic condition of those societies including women, which is of particular importance in rural communities,

Recognizing the continued need to review the impact of structural adjustment programmes in order to reduce any adverse impact on women, especially in terms of cutbacks in social services, education and health and the removal of subsidies on food and fuel,

Emphasizing the promotion of programmes aimed at financial intermediation with a view to ensuring the access of rural women to credit and to agricultural inputs and implements and, in particular, to easing collateral requirements for access to finance by women,

Recognizing that the informal sector is a major source of entrepreneurship and employment for women in developing countries and that data collection on its important contribution should be improved,

Expressing its concern about the under-representation of women in economic decision-making and stressing the importance of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policy formulation, implementation and evaluation,

Recognizing that the increase in women's participation in paid employment contributes to the empowerment of women and gender equality by promoting the status, independence, self-esteem and decision-making power of women, but also that this alone may be insufficient, since, in general, the burden of household work and primary responsibility of women for childcare can give rise to an onerous double working day for most women,

Stressing the need for a family-friendly work environment, including appropriate working hours, affordable childcare and flexible working hours, and emphasizing the principle of shared responsibility between women and men for the achievement of gender equality,

Noting the importance of the organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, in particular its funds and programmes, including the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, in facilitating the advancement of women in development,

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on the 1999 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development: Globalization, Gender and Work;[4]

2. *Calls* for the accelerated and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the relevant provisions contained in the outcomes of all other major United Nations conferences and summits and, in this regard, expresses the hope that the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century", which will be held from 5 to 9 June 2000, can take tangible and significant steps to enhance the effective participation of women in development;

3. *Stresses* that a favourable and conducive national and international environment in all fields of life is necessary for the effective integration of women in development;

4. *Urges* Governments to develop and promote methodologies for mainstreaming a gender perspective in all aspects of policy-making, including economic policy-making;

5. *Also stresses* the importance of developing national strategies for promoting sustainable and productive entrepreneurial activities to generate income among disadvantaged women and women living in poverty;

6. *Urges* all Governments to ensure women's equal rights with men and their full and equal access to education, training, employment, technology and economic and financial resources, including credit, in particular for rural women and women in the informal sector, and to facilitate, where appropriate, the transition of women from the informal to the formal sector;

7. *Recognizes* the role of microfinance including microcredit in the eradication of poverty, the empowerment of women and the generation of employment and, in this regard, notes the importance of sound national financial systems and encourages the

[4] A/54/227.

strengthening of existing and emerging microcredit institutions and their capacities, including through the support of international financial institutions;

8. *Requests* Governments to ensure that the priorities of women are included in, and that women fully participate in, decisions on public investment programmes for economic infrastructure, technology, water supply and sanitation, electrification and energy conservation, transport and road construction, and to promote the greater involvement of women beneficiaries at the project planning and implementation stages to ensure their access to jobs and contracts;

9. *Stresses* the need for assistance to enable women in developing countries, particularly grass-roots women's groups, to have full access to and use of new technologies, including information technologies, for their empowerment;

10. *Further stresses* the need to ensure that women and girls have full and equal access to all levels of education, vocational training and retraining programmes in order to improve their employment opportunities;

11. *Urges* States to design and revise laws that ensure that women are accorded full and equal rights with men to own land and other property, including through the right to inheritance, and to undertake administrative reforms and other necessary measures to give women the same right as men to credit, capital, appropriate technologies, access to markets and information;

12. *Requests* Governments to ensure the full participation of women in decision-making and policy formulation and implementation at all levels so that their priorities, skills and potentials can be adequately reflected in national policy;

13. *Calls upon* Governments to promote, *inter alia*, through legislation, family-friendly and gender-sensitive work environments and also to promote the facilitation of breastfeeding for working mothers;

14. *Stresses* the need for Governments and employers, as appropriate, to implement policies aimed at ensuring stability and security of work and to put in place social protection measures that cover temporary, part-time, informal sector and home workers, a majority of whom are women;

15. *Calls upon* the international community to make efforts to mitigate the effects of excess volatility and economic disruption, which have a disproportionately negative impact on women, and to enhance trade opportunities for developing countries in order to improve the economic conditions of women;

16. *Urges* the international community, the United Nations system and relevant organizations to give priority to assisting the efforts of developing countries to ensure the full and effective participation of women in deciding and implementing development strategies and integrating gender concerns into national programmes, including by providing adequate resources to operational activities for development in support of the efforts of Governments to ensure, *inter alia*, increased access of women to health care, capital, education, training and technology, and full and equal participation in all decision-making;

17. *Calls upon* developed countries to strengthen their efforts to achieve, as soon as possible, the agreed target of 0.7 per cent of their gross national product for overall official development assistance and, where agreed, within that target to earmark 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of gross national product for the least developed countries, so as to assist the developing countries in implementing strategies to eradicate poverty and promote development and gender equality;

18. *Urges* multilateral donors, international financial institutions and regional development banks to review and implement policies to support national efforts to ensure that a higher proportion of resources reach women, in particular in rural and remote areas;

19. *Calls upon* the United Nations system to integrate gender mainstreaming into all its programmes and policies, including in the integrated follow-up to United Nations conferences, in accordance with agreed conclusions 1997/2 on gender mainstreaming adopted by the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1997;[5]

20. *Requests* the Secretary-General to update the World Survey on the Role of Women in Development for the consideration of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session; as in the past, this survey should focus on selective emerging development issues that have an impact on the role of women in the economy at the national, regional and international levels;

21. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-sixth session the sub-item entitled "Women in development".

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9. The Committee also recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft decision:

Documents relating to women in development

The General Assembly takes note of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "An evaluation of the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women"[6] and the comments of the Secretary-General thereon.[7]

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[5] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 3* and addendum (A/52/3/Rev.1 and Add.1), chap. IV.A, para. 4.

[6] A/54/156-E/1999/102.

[7] A/54/156/Add.1-E/1999/102/Add.1.